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The End and Beginning of an Era, by John Bursey

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BRAGELONNE: THE END AND BEGINNING OF AN ERA \*\*\*

# The Vicomte de Bragelonne

The End and Beginning of an Era

by John Bursey

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The Vicomte de Bragelonne is a different sort of novel from the preceding volumes in the D'Artagnan Romances. In *The Three Musketeers* and *Twenty Years After*, we find our four heroes battling against evil forces with a combination of stunning swordplay, unmatched bravado, unbelievable ingenuity, and several strokes of great fortune. Their famous cry, "All for one and one for all!" has echoed throughout the imagination for 150 years. Movies are still being made from the stories, they still appear in television commercials, they have their own candy bar, and some current authors have even lent their talents to filling in the gaps between the novels. The swashbuckling exploits of the "four invincibles," as they are referred to in the novels, have made them sell consistently for a century and a half, a feat not achieved by many authors. The popularity of the stories, first as magazine serials and then as novels, made Dumas the most famous Frenchman of the age. The heroes and villains are clearly defined, and it is never difficult for the readers to know who to cheer for as the drama unfolds in the theater of the mind.

Dumas himself resembled, as much as one could in the 19th Century, his swashbuckling heroes. Before he embarked on the series, he was already considered one of, if not the, greatest dramatists in France. He had fought in one of the many revolutions in France at that time, and would later run guns in an Italian revolution. His unerring sense of drama had brought him theatrical acclaim the world over, and when he switched to novels, that same sense never steered him wrong. For the entirety of the D'Artagnan Romances, he had a collaborator, named Maquet, who did much of the historical research. But the many charges leveled against Dumas that he ran a literature "factory" are blatantly false. Once he got his historical framework, Dumas injected the story with his own energy and breathed life into it, many times ignoring the strict dictates of historical fact for the necessity of crafting the drama as he saw fit. Indeed, *The Three Musketeers* and *Twenty Years After* bear many structural similarities. There are clear villains (Milady, De Wardes, Richelieu, Mordaunt, Mazarin) and clear heroes and heroines, great men destined for demise, despite our heroes' efforts (Buckingham, Charles I), and yet our four heroes must triumph against all odds, united until the end.

But the clearest difference in this third volume is that our heroes are no longer united. Though inseparable in their youth, now Aramis, with the unwitting Porthos in tow, is plotting against the king, who D'Artagnan has sworn with his life to defend. Athos, once the most upright defender of nobility, is now forced to break his sword before his monarch, and renounce the sacred vow he pledged with his son in *Twenty Years After* to respect royalty in all its forms. Never, even, do the four come face to face in the course of the entire novel. Time has sent them in different directions, and managed to separate them when constant villains in the course of forty years have failed.

Dumas uses this division of his heroes to skillfully insert his own opinions on that phase of French history, which in many ways paralleled the time he lived in himself. Although Dumas's distinct storytelling talents are as evident as in the former novels, Dumas sets the twilight of his characters in the dawn of a new age, exploiting the contrast as a form of social commentary. The four former musketeers are now drawn to each represent a virtue. D'Artagnan is Loyalty, Athos is Nobility, Porthos is Strength, and Aramis is Cunning. When Louis XIV dishonors Raoul and casts off Athos, he sheds the ideal of Nobility as he in reality broke the power of the French nobles and brought the entire country under his control. When he tames D'Artagnan, as Aramis and Porthos are fighting for their lives at Belle-Isle, he symbolically gains the Loyalty of his servants, which he would keep during his long reign. When Porthos meets his demise at Belle-Isle, Strength is no longer a virtue prized in France, as Industry (in the form of Colbert) and Cunning (in Aramis) now become the hallmarks of the time. When Fouquet falls, so does Generosity. When Louis takes Louise as his mistress, condemning Raoul to his death, Fidelity dies with the poor young cavalier as Innocence is corrupted. As D'Artagnan, Raoul, Athos, and Porthos meet their ends, and only Aramis is left alive, Dumas indicates the death of these noble virtues in France, virtues that he urged his contemporaries to assume again in his own time.

This new generation that comes with the ascension of Louis XIV is, indeed, pale in comparison to the times in which the four musketeers had their great exploits. D'Artagnan and Athos are endlessly commenting on these youngsters, always unfavorably, and they are generally accurate. Raoul, the true son of Athos, and the symbolic son of the four, is never as quick to draw his sword as D'Artagnan would have

been at that age, though he is equally as skillful in its use. Although he loses his one true love, Louise, as D'Artagnan did forty years ago, Constance, this loss kills the younger hero. He is more thoughtful, more sensitive, and thereby weaker. The villains, too, are watered down. De Wardes, certainly the most "evil" character in the novel, pales in comparison with the great villains D'Artagnan and his friends had to face. Colbert, though ugly, ill-humored, and set to ruin the kind, generous, affable Fouquet, is actually a blessing in disguise, and it is through his "great works" that France is ready to rise to ever-greater glory in the coming reign. The Chevalier de Lorraine, always a disruptive influence, is checked not through confrontation or daring intrigue, but by artful court maneuvering. De Guiche, Raoul's loyal friend, and as consummate a nobleman of the new reign as one might expect to find, is more concerned with his love affairs and his own happiness than his role in safeguarding Raoul's honor. Though he does fight De Wardes in the only illegal duel in the novel, he loses, and does nothing to help Raoul when the king's treachery is discovered. And age has affected the four heroes, too. D'Artagnan pulls off his masterstroke in England not with his four friends by his side and sword drawn, as he did in the former novels, but with stealth and cunning. He defeats De Wardes not by a duel, which would be his ordinary mode of operation, but by outwitting him. The only scenes that are reminiscent of the times of former glory are the riot at the execution, where D'Artagnan, with Raoul by his side, defeats a whole mob, and Aramis and Porthos's desperate final stand in the grotto. But even these are tainted; D'Artagnan's action ends up going against the values he would have prized, had he known the truth, and the events in the grotto cost Porthos his life.

But these differences in the times and the changes in our heroes as they age do not detract from the work, but rather enrich it. It is a more mature novel than its predecessors, richer in detail due to the slower pacing. The mood, too, is much darker, especially towards the end, when we know that impending doom is approaching for Raoul, as his love affair unravels, and for Aramis and Porthos as their plot is detected. And, of course, the mystery of the man in the iron mask, around which the latter portions of the book are based, is one of the most dark and sinister mysteries in all history. The characters, though they each defend an abstract ideal, are as rich and vivid as they ever were, if not more so, and the depth of emotion that Dumas explores is much wider than in the two earlier books. Porthos was modeled on Dumas's own father, and legend has it that the author wept for three days as he was writing the death of that gentle giant. Many readers experience the same, no matter how many times they may have read that passage. Even Aramis, according to Dumas, was moved to shed his first and only tears. Anyone who has ever loved and lost can feel Raoul's pain, and any parent can understand Athos's anguish as he sees his son off to certain death. No longer are characters simply good or simply evil, they are their own entities, sometimes good, sometimes evil. The Duchesse de Chevreuse, once Aramis's close friend and contact at court, the mother of Raoul, now schemes against Aramis, hoping to bring about his downfall. Queen Anne of Austria, once the beautiful, helpless heroine, is now the ailing, sometimes imperial, matriarch of the royal household, tortured by the son she was forced to forsake. In other words, they are human. The refinement of the four principles, as age steals upon them, adds an element that is somehow lacking from the former books. They now hail from different spheres, which lends richness to their portrayal. Aramis is the man of God, with a scheme always in the works. Athos is the dignified, retired nobleman, whose only concerns are debts left unpaid and the launching of his son into the world. Porthos is a great baron, ever ready to help, ever seeking another title, ever seeking the noble airs that were not his birthright, but to which he came upon his wife's death. And D'Artagnan is a hardened soldier, casting a cynical eye everywhere, still loyal, but somewhat embittered, trading in his customary "mordioux!" for the "bah!" more common to old men.

The character of D'Artagnan is, of course, the focus of the Romances. Dumas frequently admitted that D'Artagnan was the man he could never be. In *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, the character expands even further. Although his primary symbolic representation is that of the virtue of Loyalty, he is not devoid of other virtues. He has his share of Cunning, Nobility, and Strength, as well as the virtues of the other characters. He's a sort of Everyman, superior in every respect, and the only man that can tame him is Louis, the greatest French monarch of them all. The scene in which D'Artagnan goes to the scene of the duel between De Wardes and De Guiche, and from the forensic evidence manages to piece together the details exactly, predates the classic detective fiction that

was becoming popular in the States with Edgar Allen Poe's murders in the Rue Morgue. He has learned to maneuver in royal circles with infinite grace and delicacy, and until the end he boasts that he can always make the king do what he wants. Even outside the D'Artagnan Romances, he has gotten around. He's found his way onto the big screen countless times, most recently in two major films in the 1990s. He's found his way onto the stage, not only in Dumas's own adaptations of the Musketeers saga, but as a walk-on character in *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Rostand, for example. Many talented authors, in many different ages, have lent their pens to continuations to the saga. Paul Feval and a M. Lassez wrote a series of eight novels based on the adventures of D'Artagnan with a young Cyrano de Bergerac. These are supposedly tales of Grimaud's, Athos's servant, related to Athos, and Aramis even makes an appearance. Roger Nimier's last book was *D'Artagnan amoureux*, set shortly after *The Three Musketeers*. He had planned more in the series, but unfortunately died in 1956. The 1993 winner of le Prix Interallie was a novel entitled *Le dernier amour d'Aramis* by Jean-Pierre Dufreigne, which focuses on Aramis, the most mysterious of the four and the one whose past remains the greatest mystery. Although Dumas's portrayal of the character of D'Artagnan is the most famous, it was not the first. Dumas got much of his initial material from a book written by a soldier, Courtilz de Sandras, who supplemented his income by writing historical fictions. He published his fictional *Memoirs of M. d'Artagnan* in 1700, and Dumas, after reading the first volume, used much of the material as his basis for the first part of *The Three Musketeers*. The real D'Artagnan, although he was Captain-Lieutenant of the musketeers, and he did arrest Fouquet and escort him to prison, was far from the dashing hero Dumas made him. As for the other characters, particularly Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, they also appeared in this fictional memoir, and lacking even the scant details about them that subsequent historians have managed to bring to the light of day, Dumas's ever-fertile imagination made them three of the most famous men in history.

As a closing, instead of more of my thoughts on the novels, I instead quote what Robert Louis Stevenson wrote about *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*: "My acquaintance with the VICOMTE began, somewhat indirectly, in the year of grace 1863, when I had the advantage of studying certain illustrated dessert plates in a hotel at Nice. The name of d'Artagnan in the legends I already saluted like an old friend, for I had met it the year before in a work of Miss Yonge's. My first perusal was in one of those pirated editions that swarmed at that time out of Brussels, and ran to such a troop of neat and dwarfish volumes. I understood but little of the merits of the book; my strongest memory is of the execution of d'Eymeric and Lyodot—a strange testimony to the dulness of a boy, who could enjoy the rough-and-tumble in the Place de Grève, and forget d'Artagnan's visits to the two financiers. My next reading was in winter-time, when I lived alone upon the Pentlands. I would return in the early night from one of my patrols with the shepherd; a friendly face would meet me in the door, a friendly retriever scurry upstairs to fetch my slippers; and I would sit down with the VICOMTE for a long, silent, solitary lamp-light evening by the fire. And yet I know not why I call it silent, when it was enlivened with such a clatter of horse-shoes, and such a rattle of musketry, and such a stir of talk; or why I call those evenings solitary in which I gained so many friends. I would rise from my book and pull the blind aside, and see the snow and the glittering hollies chequer a Scotch garden, and the winter moonlight brighten the white hills. Thence I would turn again to that crowded and sunny field of life in which it was so easy to forget myself, my cares, and my surroundings: a place busy as a city, bright as a theatre, thronged with memorable faces, and sounding with delightful speech. I carried the thread of that epic into my slumbers, I woke with it unbroken, I rejoiced to plunge into the book again at breakfast, it was with a pang that I must lay it down and turn to my own labours; for no part of the world has ever seemed to me so charming as these pages, and not even my friends are quite so real, perhaps quite so dear, as d'Artagnan.

"Since then I have been going to and fro at very brief intervals in my favourite book; and I have now just risen from my last (let me call it my fifth) perusal, having liked it better and admired it more seriously than ever. Perhaps I have a sense of ownership, being so well known in these six volumes. Perhaps I think that d'Artagnan delights to have me read of him, and Louis Quatorze is gratified, and Fouquet throws me a look, and Aramis, although he knows I do not love him, yet plays to me with his best graces, as to an old patron of the show. Perhaps, if I am not careful, something may befall me like what befell George IV. about the battle of Waterloo, and I may come to fancy the VICOMTE one of the first, and

Heaven knows the best, of my own works. “

So many readers have thought the same over the last century and a half, and many more will in the times to come. Like Dumas itself, the work has many flaws. There are errors in history, chronology, and in some places Dumas even writes the wrong year or gets confused about a character's age. Dumas always cared more about the drama, the suspense, the history he was creating, rather than the sometimes boring facts of actual history. He took his historical sketch and filled it out from his own imagination, creating characters whose actions changed history within the novels, and who have enlivened history ever since.

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There has been much confusion over the years as to which books form the “Musketeers Series” or the D’Artagnan Romances, as they are referred to by scholars. The greatest confusion lies in the manner in which editors split the lengthy third volume of the series. The title of the whole work is *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, however, its subtitle is *Ten Years Later*, and so some older editions use that as the title. Also, the novel is split into three, four, or five volumes, depending on the edition. When split into three volumes, the titles are: *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, *Louise de la Valliere*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. In four volumes the titles are: *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, *Ten Years Later*, *Louise de la Valliere*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. The copies of *The Man in the Iron Mask* that are sold in bookstores today correspond to the last volume of the four-volume edition. The five-volume editions rarely give separate titles to the volumes. Also adding to the confusion is the fact that Dumas considered *The Three Musketeers* to be two books: *The Three Musketeers* and *The Four Musketeers*. The split occurs, naturally, shortly after D’Artagnan is made a musketeer. Some older editions split this book in this fashion. Also, there are two other books that feature the characters of the D’Artagnan Romances that are, however, falsely attributed to Dumas. These two titles are *D’Artagnan and the King-Maker* and *The Son of Porthos*. Not only do these novels outright contradict the earlier books in the series, but they were clearly not written by Alexandre Dumas. Many catalogues, however, list them among Dumas's works. Most commonly, though, the entire D’Artagnan Romances are found in five books, with *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* being split into three volumes. Here is a listing of them in chronological order, with possible subdivisions listed in parenthesis:

The Three Musketeers — serialized 1844  
(The Four Musketeers)  
Twenty Years After — serialized 1845  
The Vicomte de Bragelonne — serialized 1847-1850  
(Ten Years Later)  
Louise de la Valliere  
The Man in the Iron Mask

For the purposes of the Project Gutenberg etexts, *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* was split into four texts, using the same divisions as the four-volume editions. However, another text exists, entitled *Ten Years Later*, which was published by Project Gutenberg before *Twenty Years After*, even though it occurs later in the story. While it is correct in claiming that it is a sequel to *The Three Musketeers*, it neglects to acknowledge that *Twenty Years After* comes between *The Three Musketeers* and that etext. This etext also, like some novel editions, uses the title *Ten Years Later* to refer to *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* as a whole, and it covers portions of the etexts *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* and the newer *Ten Years Later*.

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What follows are some short biographical details about the real personages behind the characters created by Dumas. Although some of them do not appear in *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, they are referred to frequently, and so they were included.

Anne of Austria: (1601-66) Anne was the daughter of Phillip III of Spain. She married Louis XIII in 1615, and after his death, ruled as Regent from 1643-61 with Mazarin as her prime minister. Modern historians reckon that she was almost certainly Mazarin's lover, but no evidence beyond rumor exists of a secret marriage between the two, as Dumas suggests. She died of breast cancer in 1666, though symptoms of

her disease did not appear until 1664. She was supposedly in love with the elder Buckingham in around 1646, but nothing suggests that she was actually his mistress, though many thought so. She was, though, in her youth, one of the greatest beauties of all Europe.

**Aramis:** Aramis's real name was Henri d'Aramitz. Like his fictional counterpart, he was a clergyman, a Bernais, and like D'Artagnan, he was a Gascon. He joined the musketeers in 1640, married in 1654, had four children, and died around 1674. He was a nephew to M. de Tréville, captain of the musketeers from 1634-1642. He was never, so far as history can tell, involved with the Jesuits. A German named Nickel was Vicar-General from 1652-1664 and from 1664-1681 an Italian named Jean-Paul Oliva headed the order.

**Athos:** Athos was, in real life, Armand de Sillegue d'Athos d'Auteville. He was born around 1615, joined the musketeers at the age of twenty-five, and died in Paris in 1643. He was probably a nobleman, as Athos was, and was a Gascon, as D'Artagnan was, and was also a cousin to M. de Tréville, captain of the musketeers from 1634-1642. Dumas claimed, in the preface to *The Three Musketeers*, to be nothing more than the editor of the memoirs of the Comte de la Fere, presumably the same memoirs Athos is seen working on during the course of *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*.

**Baisemeaux:** (1613?-97) Francois de Montlezun joined the musketeers in 1634 where he served with our four heroes' historical counterparts. He purchased the post of governor of the Bastille in 1658 for forty thousand livres, not one hundred and fifty thousand as Dumas claims, and held the post until his death. He left a fortune of two million livres.

**Beaufort:** (1616-69) Francois de Vendome, the Duc de Beaufort, was a grandson of Henry IV. and Gabrielle d'Estrees. He was jailed in Vincennes in 1643 for plotting against Mazarin, and he escaped in 1648 (with the aid of Athos and Grimaud according to *Twenty Years After*). After fighting against the king in the Fronde, he reconciled with the throne in 1653. He died at the siege of Candia.

**Belliere:** (1608-1705) Suzanne de Bruc, Marquis de Plessis-Belliere, called Elise by Dumas, was widowed in 1654. She was very close to Fouquet, and it was she who organized his social engagements, not Madame Fouquet. When Fouquet was arrested in 1661, she was kept under house arrest until 1665.

**Bragelonne:** Dumas's source for the character Raoul de Bragelonne comes from a slight mention of a suitor of Louise de Valliere's while she was still at Blois. The most likely candidate is Jean de Bragelonne, who was an obscure councilor at the parliament at Rennes. However, there were several other Bragelonnés who were also in the area: Jerome, his son Francois, both soldiers, and Jacques, Gaston d'Orleans's chief steward. Jean was more than likely related to one of these other Bragelonnés, but historians are not certain as to which.

**Buckingham:** (1627-87) George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham, was the son of the George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who figured so prominently in *The Three Musketeers*, and Katherine Manners, then the richest heiress in England. After his father's assassination, he was raised alongside the children of Charles I. He was one of the rakes of Charles II's court—hot-tempered, unpredictable, and bisexual. Though he had great influence over the king, his disputes with the monarch landed him in the Tower on four separate occasions. His love for Henrietta-Anne Stuart was well-attested, and often drove him to extremities of behavior.

**Charles II:** (1630-85) Charles Stuart fled to France in 1646, returned briefly to Scotland in 1651, where he was crowned, was routed by Cromwell in September, and returned to France until Mazarin signed a treaty with Cromwell in 1655 declaring the deposed monarch *persona non grata* in France. With Monk's support, he finally returned to London as a king in 1661. During his reign there were two wars with the Dutch, the great plague occurred, the Habeas Corpus Act was passed, and the Great Fire swept London. The visit to Mazarin depicted at the beginning of *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* has its basis in an actual visit paid by the deposed monarch to the Cardinal in Spain in 1659. It was only one of many attempts to gain French support.

**Chevreuse:** (1600-79) Marie-Aime de Rohan Bazon married the Duc de

Chevreuse in 1622. She was a close friend of Anne of Austria, and used many lovers in her plots against Richelieu. Although regularly exiled by Louis XIII, she constantly snuck back to court. She was imprisoned in 1628, escaped in 1637, and fled to Spain, and then England, where she was again briefly imprisoned on the Isle of Wight. She moved to Belgium, and was allowed to return to France by Mazarin in 1643. She was quickly exiled again, but allowed to return under the Amnesty of Reuil in 1649. She continued her intrigues during the Fronde and was named as Raoul de Bragelonne's mother in *Twenty Years After*.

Colbert: (1619-83) Jean-Baptiste Colbert was born in Reims, the son of a minor official and an agent of Richelieu's. He was employed first by the Secretary of State for War, in 1640, and later became Mazarin's intendant in 1655. He purchased a barony in 1658 and entered the aristocracy. Mazarin's words on his deathbed, recommending Colbert to Louis XIV were portrayed by Dumas with accuracy. Mazarin actually said, "I owe you everything, but I pay my debt to your majesty in giving you Colbert." He became Louis's chief minister in 1661 and immediately began administering the reforms necessary after Fouquet's regime. In a decade, he effectively tripled the revenues. Although he did not personally care for him, Dumas's estimation of Colbert's "glorious works" and projects was fairly accurate—in addition to his building projects he also supported many French industries and sent explorers and colonists to America. Although he built the French navy, he eventually became opposed to the wars of Louis XIV, as they thwarted his efforts to keep the budget balanced.

Conde: (1621-86) Louis de Bourbon, Duc d'Enghien, became Prince de Conde in 1646, on the death of his father. During the 1640s he distinguished himself in several battles and gained a name for his military skills. He believed, however, that he had not been rewarded sufficiently, and alienated both the queen and Mazarin to the extent that he was jailed for a year in 1650. In retaliation he raised an army to take the king away from his advisors, failed, and left France in 1653. He continued to fight in every campaign against France until his rehabilitation in 1659, after which he retired to his estates. He returned to service in 1668 and died in battle in 1674.

D'Artagnan: Charles de Batz-Castlemore, sieur d'Artagnan, was born in Tarbes around 1615. He joined Richelieu's Guards in 1635 and then the musketeers in 1644. During the years 1646-1657, when the musketeers were disbanded in actual history, Mazarin used him as a courier. He was appointed second-in-command to the absentee Captain-Lieutenant of the musketeers (a nephew of Mazarin's who had no interest in the work) in 1657, when the company was reformed. Although he only held the rank of Lieutenant, he was the actual commander of the troops. He married in 1659, had two sons, and separated from his wife in 1665. It was indeed the real D'Artagnan who, in 1661, arrested Fouquet, though not nearly as dramatically as Dumas's depiction, and escorted him first to Angers, and later, after the former minister's trial, to Pignerol. He became Captain-Lieutenant of the musketeers in 1667, in other words, the commander of the musketeers, as the rank of Captain-General was reserved for the king himself. During Louis's invasion of the Dutch Republic, he was briefly governor of Lille in 1672. He was killed at the siege of Maastricht in March of 1673. From his few surviving documents, he appears to have been rather an unimaginative soldier with a great respect for authority. He never lost his Gascon accent, which is detectable even in his letters. His spelling was atrocious even by the standards of the time. Dumas bases his character largely on his own imagination and from another fictional work from 1700 entitled *The Memoirs of M. d'Artagnan* by Courtilz de Sandras, from which he got the basis for the first few chapters of *The Three Musketeers*. Dumas never, however, read beyond the first volume of Sandras's work, and vastly altered the material he did read, making it uniquely his own. The character of Milady also comes from Sandras's writings, wherein D'Artagnan encounters a mysterious English noblewoman known only as Miledi.

Fouquet: (1615-80) Raised to power by Mazarin, Nicholas Fouquet was far from the brilliant administrator portrayed by Dumas. He built a vast fortune through blatant abuses of power during his tenure as superintendent of France's finances, and generally dispersed that fortune in the construction of his mansion at Vaux and in his role as a famous patron of the arts. His generous style of management won him admiration, but the members of the court generally resented his obvious

corruption. Louis XIV had Fouquet arrested in 1661, more probably from fear of his influence rather than jealousy, though Fouquet did possibly take some liberties with the king's mistress during a royal visit. Belle-Isle was never given to the king; Louis sent a garrison to occupy it after Fouquet had been arrested. Fouquet sold his post of procureur-general to Louis for 1.4 million livres, not Vanel. The real D'Artagnan, Charles de Batz-Castlemore, arrested him in September and escorted him to Pignerol after his three-year trial. Dumas largely altered the character of Fouquet from his historical counterpart, turning him into a Romantic cavalier who had all the qualities Dumas himself admired, and making him a foil for the somewhat lackluster Colbert.

Guiche: (1637-73) Armand de Gramont, Comte de Guiche, was a soldier, adventurer, and a bisexual. He was part of the entourage of the homosexual Philippe d'Orleans, where many reckoned him the handsomest man at court. He was known for being vain, overbearing, and somewhat contemptuous, but many lovers of both genders often overlooked these flaws. It is generally accepted that he became the lover of Henrietta d'Orleans, but for a time he also paid court to Louise de la Valliere. Guiche was, however, not sufficiently enamored with Louise to challenge the king's affections, and, according to Madame de La Fayette (whose memoirs were one of Dumas's major sources), he "gave her up and even quarreled with her, using her very rudely." He was exiled in 1662 for attempting to come between Louis and Louise. He then fought against the Turks in Poland, against the English for the Dutch, and eventually returned to France in 1669. He returned to court in 1671.

Gourville: (1625-1703) Jean Herault de Gourville participated in the Fronde before coming to work for Fouquet. After Fouquet's arrest he was sentenced to death, but he escaped to Brussels, where he lived by less than honest means.

Henrietta: (1644-1670) Henrietta-Anne Stuart, daughter of Charles I and Henrietta-Maria (Henriette in the text), was left behind at Exeter when her mother fled to France, but her governess smuggled her to France in 1646, where she was raised Catholic. The "privations" which she supposedly endured in France were greatly exaggerated by Dumas. With a reputation for cleverness and beauty, she was married to Philippe d'Orleans in 1661. Shortly afterwards, the obvious attentions of both Buckingham and De Guiche did indeed arouse her husband's jealousy, leading to both Buckingham and De Guiche being persuaded to leave the court. Their marriage, due to Philippe's homosexuality and excessive jealousy, was far short of successful. Before the king took La Valliere as his mistress, he was quite captivated by Henrietta, and it wasn't until the monarch's attentions shifted to La Valliere that she became receptive to De Guiche's advances. In 1670 she was sent to England to persuade Charles II to sign the Treaty of Dover, which he did, and was poisoned to death on her return.

Lambert: (1619-83) John Lambert, though trained as a lawyer, turned out to be one of the greatest soldiers of the English Civil War. He played a large roll in installing Cromwell as Lord Protector, but later turned against him. He led disgruntled soldiers against Richard Cromwell, and in October 1659 he dismissed the "Rump" Parliament, effectively taking control of the country himself. Monk defeated him in 1661 and he was sent to the Tower in 1662. He was later banished to Guernsey, where he lived out his life in confinement.

Laporte: (1603-80) Pierre de la Porte entered the queen's service in 1621. He helped her carry on correspondence with the Spanish court and was imprisoned for "treason" in 1637. When Anne of Austria assumed the Regency in 1643 he was returned to favor. He became Louis XIV's valet de chambre in 1645. His memoirs were one of Dumas's major sources of historical research.

La Valliere: (1644-1710) Françoise-Louise de la Baume le Blanc, later the Duchesse de la Valliere, was born near Amboise and became part of the entourage of the Duchesse d'Orleans at Blois. There it was rumored that a young man, later identified as Jean de Bragelonne, was in love with her. The affair did not progress far, but Dumas used it as his basis for the character of Raoul de Bragelonne. After the death of Gaston d'Orleans, she moved to Paris, where the Duchesse de Choisy proposed her as lady of honor to the new Madame (Henrietta). Soon afterwards the king took an interest in her, and she was his mistress from 1661-67. They had four children together. She was not considered terribly beautiful—she was slim, tall, and had blue eyes and bad teeth. She



limped slightly, due to a badly set broken leg, but was reported to dance well. In 1670, after Madame de Montespan had replaced her, she retired from court life. She took the veil in 1674. The Oxford World's Classics edition of *Louise de la Valliere*, 1998, has her portrait on the cover. Many of the episodes between Louise and Louis, though perhaps chronologically displaced or condensed, were portrayed very accurately by Dumas, including the flight to the convent, the decision of the king and Madame to pretend that he was in love with her, and the king riding beside her carriage during the promenades.

**Lorraine:** (1643-1702) Philippe de Lorraine was called the Chevalier de Lorraine because he once intended to join the Order of Malta. He was the favorite of Philippe d'Orleans for many years, and he received military and ecclesiastical preference as a result. Like Philippe, he, too, was homosexual. He was heir to the Duchy of Lorraine, but stripped of his title in 1662. He protested, and was ordered to leave France. He assumed the title of Duke in 1675, and was recognized by every other European nation besides France.

**Louis XIV:** (1638-1715) Louis de Bourbon, "The Sun King," assumed the throne in 1643 after the death of Louis XIII. Anne of Austria ruled during his infancy, with Gaston d'Orleans as her Lieutenant-Governor and Mazarin as her first minister. Mazarin managed to not only preserve the monarchy through the Fronde, but also strengthen it considerably. Upon Mazarin's death in March, 1661, Louis determined to rule personally. With Colbert's assistance, he removed the corrupt Fouquet and declared himself the Sun King the following year. His rule of 72 years was the longest of any European monarch. Later in his reign, his wars threatened to bankrupt the state, as well as his legendary excesses, such as the great palace at Versailles. He is famous for the quote, "Je suis l'etat," meaning, "I am the State."

**Madame:** The title customarily given to the wife of the king's brother. Until 1660 it was given to Gaston d'Orleans's wife, Marguerite. After Gaston's death, it fell to Henrietta of England, and Marguerite was referred to as the "Dowager Madame." See also "Monsieur."

**Malicorne:** (1626-94) Germain Texier was the Baron de Malicorne. Although Dumas portrays him as the son of a syndic, he was in fact a squire of the Duc de Guise by 1648. He was also the lover of Mademoiselle de Pons. He married, in 1665, not Montalais, but a daughter from the first marriage of Saint-Remy, Louise de la Valliere's step-father.

**Mancini:** (1640-1715) Marie de Mancini captured the young Louis XIV's heart in 1658, but he was forced to abandon her in favor of a political marriage to the Spanish Infanta Maria-Theresa. Her sister, Olympe (1639-1708), later became one of Louis's mistresses. Dumas misplaces the chronology slightly; Mazarin's nieces were removed from court in 1659. The meeting between Louis and Marie portrayed by Dumas was an amalgamation of two meetings, both of which occurred in 1659.

**Manicamp:** (1628?-1708) Louis de Madallan de Lesparre was the Seigneur of Manicamp, and later the Comte de Manicamp. He was a soldier, who fought with Conde at Lens, and a few other battles. He lost an arm at Charenton in 1652. Dumas took the name for one of his characters, but preserved nothing else.

**Maria-Theresa:** (1638-83) Maria-Theresa of Austria was the daughter of Philip IV of Spain. She married Louis XIV on June 6, 1660, to promote a French-Spanish alliance wrought by Mazarin. The king's constant infidelities caused her a great deal of anguish, as she was truly in love with Louis XIV. In real life she was quite pious and preferred to devote most of her life to good works. Dumas found her quite boring, and relegates her to a minor character.

**Mazarin:** (1602-61) Jules Mazarin was a diplomat in the service of the Pope when he was sent to negotiate with Richelieu in 1630. He became Richelieu's protegee, and was naturalized French in 1639. In 1641 Richelieu had him named a cardinal as well as his own successor. It is generally accepted that he became Anne of Austria's lover, though not, as Dumas suggests, her secret husband. He was not, actually, an ordained priest. He raised taxes, aroused the jealousy of the nobles, and was an Italian—all of which made him extremely unpopular with nearly every class of the French people. Most considered him to be extremely

self-serving and quite greedy. His private fortune is estimated at between 13 and 40 million livres. His diplomatic skills, however, were considerable. Abroad he furthered French interests in southern Germany by ending the Thirty Years War in 1648 and allied France with Cromwell in 1654. At home he maneuvered the monarchy through the Fronde, leaving it stronger as a result. The priest who attended him on his deathbed insisted that he died in the true faith, though he was reckoned during his life more of a philosopher than a Christian.

Michon, Marie: The pseudonym of the Duchesse de Chevreuse in *The Three Musketeers*.

Monk: (1608-70) George Monk was a career soldier who served under Cromwell and, as a reward, was made governor of Scotland in 1654. In 1659, as disorder in England was rising steadily, he decided to step into the fray, and marched south in January, 1661, with 6,000 men. He arrived in London five weeks later, unopposed, but without revealing his motives. His decision to reinstate the Stuarts was probably influenced by popular opinion, though his true motives still baffle historians, and he met the returning King Charles II at Dover on May 23, 1661. Charles made him the Duke of Albermarle and gave him the highest offices in the state. Monk then retired to private life, but served as a naval commander in later wars with the Dutch.

Monsieur: The court title of the king's brother. Gaston d'Orleans held it until his death in 1660. The title fell to Philip d'Anjou, who also assumed the title of Duc d'Orleans.

Montalais: Nicole-Anne-Constance de Montalais, called Aure by Dumas, was, like La Valliere, a maid of honor at the court of Gaston d'Orleans. In 1661 she entered the service of Henrietta d'Orleans, and shared an apartment with La Valliere. She became La Valliere's confidante, and used the information thus garnered to her own ends. She was known as a notorious schemer, and the historical record does indicate that she was in love, at least for a time, with a man named Malicorne.

Montespan: (1641-1707) Françoise-Athenais de Rochechouart de Mortemart was born at the Chateau de Tonnay-Charente. She was a maid of honor at the marriage of Philip d'Orleans and Henrietta Stuart in March, 1661. In 1663 she married the Duc de Montespan et d'Antin, and replaced La Valliere as the king's mistress in 1667.

Orleans, Gaston d': (1608-60) Gaston-Jean-Baptiste de France, Duc d'Orleans, was the younger brother of Louis XIII. He regularly plotted against Richelieu, thereby indirectly against his brother, the king. He became Lieutenant-Governor of the Kingdom when Anne of Austria assumed the Regency in 1643. He supported Anne during the first Fronde, but turned against her in the second, for which he was exiled to Blois in 1652. He reconciled with the court in 1659. Aramis judged him as a man "void of courage and honesty," a view shared by his contemporaries. The Cardinal de Retz said of him that he had "everything a gentleman should have, except courage." His presence in the novel is entirely fictional; he died in February, 1660.

Orleans, Philippe d': (1640-71) Philippe, called Philip by Dumas, was the second son of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, and Louis XIV's younger brother. He was Duc d'Anjou until 1660 when his uncle, Gaston d'Orleans died, leaving the title of Duc d'Orleans and the court title of "Monsieur" to him. He married Henrietta Stuart of England in 1661, but his homosexuality and jealousy ensured that the marriage was less than ideal, to say the least.

Pellisson: (1640-1701) Paul Pellisson (called Pelisson by Dumas) was part of Fouquet's literary circle and a member of the French Academy. Disfigured by smallpox in his youth, his ugliness brought him a sort of fame. After Fouquet's arrest, Pellisson wrote quite spiritedly in the defense of the former Superintendent of Finances. He was rewarded for his loyalty with five years in the Bastille. He subsequently regained the royal favor, and became the Historiographer Royal.

Richelieu: (1585-1642) Although he does not appear in *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, Armand-Jean du Plessis, Duc de Richelieu, is mentioned several times. He was an admirer of Machiavelli and, under the reign of Louis XIII, he became the most powerful man in France. He greatly strengthened France both at home and abroad, and named Mazarin as

his successor shortly before his death. In *The Three Musketeers*, it is he who lays the snare for Anne of Austria involving the famous diamond studs given to the Duke of Buckingham. D'Artagnan and his three friends rescue the queen from this embarrassing predicament.

**Saint-Aignan:** (1610-87) Francois de Beauvillier, the Comte de Saint-Aignan, was a former governor of the Touraine. He finally realized his ambition, mentioned by Dumas, of joining the French Academy in 1663. Before becoming First Gentleman to the King's Bedchamber, he was part of Gaston d'Orleans's military household. Though quite a few years Louis XIV's senior, he became the young king's chief purveyor of pleasures.

**Saint-Remy:** Francoise le Prevot de la Coutelaye became Madame de Saint-Remy following her third marriage. Her first was to a man named Besnard, a councilor of the Parliament at Rennes. Her second marriage was to Laurent de la Baume le Blanc, lord of the manor of La Valliere. He was Louise de la Valliere's father. Laurent died in 1651, and in 1655 she married Jacques Couravel, Marquis de Saint-Remy, First Chamberlain to Gaston d'Orleans. After Gaston's death, they both moved to Paris.

**Tréville:** (1598-1672) Arnaud-Jean du Peyrer, Comte de Troisvilles (written and pronounced Tréville) does not appear in *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, but he was D'Artagnan's (both the real and fictional) predecessor as Captain of the Musketeers. He was a career soldier and, like D'Artagnan, a Gascon. He was appointed Captain-Lieutenant of the Musketeers in 1634 (the rank of Captain-General was reserved for the king), and was exiled in 1642 for opposing Richelieu. Mazarin disbanded the musketeers in 1646 (an historical fact ignored by Dumas), and Tréville retired to Foix as its governor. In *The Three Musketeers* (which adds about 10 years to the ages of the historical counterparts), it was in Tréville's office that the first meeting between D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis occurred.

**Vanel:** (1644-1703) Anne-Marguerite Vanel was the daughter of Claude Vanel (a magistrate in the Paris Parliament) and became the wife of Jean Coiffer (a member of the Royal Audit Office) in 1654. Contemporaries described her as a "dainty and extremely pretty young woman with a lively and very witty turn of mind." She was Fouquet's mistress during the 1650s, and later transferred her affections to Colbert. Her high spirits annoyed Colbert, and he passed her off to his brother.

**Wardes:** (1620-88) Francois-Rene Crespin du Bec was the Marquis de Vardes, and a noted schemer and bold liar. Some women, though, including Madame de Motteville, found him charming. Dumas creates two characters out of the historical De Vardes. The father plays a prominent part in *The Three Musketeers* and *Twenty Years After*, and the son in *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, though they were, in reality, the same man. He was named Governor of Aigues-Mortes in 1660 and was banished there a few years later following a court scandal. Although a favorite of Louis XIV, he got entangled in a plot by Olympe Mancini (then the Comtesse de Soissons) to avenge her sister, Marie, whom the king had abandoned in favor of his political marriage to Maria-Theresa of Spain. He remained in Aigues-Mortes for 17 years.

Much of the information for these biographies was taken from the David Coward's editions of the *D'Artagnan Romances*, published by Oxford World's Classics. Additional material came from the Fireblade Coffeehouse's web page on Alexandre Dumas at [www.hoboes.com/html/FireBlade/Dumas/](http://www.hoboes.com/html/FireBlade/Dumas/). The quote from Robert Louis Stevenson comes from his *A Gossip on a Novel of Dumas's* from *Memories and Portraits*.

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